

Minutes of March 14th Meeting of the Energy Development Systems and Support Group

Attending: Steve Burge, Bob Topping, Miles Nelson, Pam Juliano, Susan Etzel, Richard Root, Lou Sansevero, Deb Dull

Guest: Winston Inoway

Susan welcomed everyone. Minutes were reviewed and approved.

Bob Topping talked about the Statewide Energy Task Force. The next meeting is set for May 13 at the Gadsby Plant in SLC. Described the career ladders materials from DWS that have been developed. Have given out 1600 posters that describe Energy Careers and You. Also did a large energy supertour last summer that involved 60 teachers last summer. Hope to do it again. Part of this was to develop a definition of energy that could be used for skill competencies. Also, have put on a Safety Fest and Workforce Challenge in November with Pam Perlech and industry representatives. Bob said 110 industry and business representatives participated. Will meet again in November of this year. There is a big need to maintain talent. Any marketing and public relations we do should be designed to build and maintain talent. One big nuclear power project, which is in the planning stages in the intermountain area, will suck the talent from the region. We need to promote some of the activities that our companies are now doing to attract and retain talent. There are some neat things going on. There are highly skilled trades folks that have lots of years experience, but there is nothing behind them. Need to get some young folks in the pipeline.

Richard said it is hard to get boilermakers for turnarounds. Just now getting some young apprentices, but almost no backfill or planning going on. Need to convince the younger generation to look at these opportunities. There is more money in the crafts, but kids want to do computer-related stuff.

Bob said they are focusing a lot of training efforts on San Juan communities.

Deb said that the emphasis from state school officials is to have kids prepare for college. That emphasis needs to be more balanced. Steve Burge said there is some efforts to get a stronger vocational voice on the higher ed councils.

Steve said he will plan on being involved with the Energy Task Force at the state level. Talent development and lifelong learning is the way to go. Problem of seasoned talent retiring is mushrooming. Companies are now realizing the issue, and are buying/stealing talent from each other. Everyone needs truck drivers, and the number being produced at the college is not enough to meet the need. Miles said the college has a defined capacity, and needs to get more students with interest.

Bob said we need to have demographics of our local area and industry and let that determine future economic and training needs. College can be the engine that drives this.

Richard reported that Bob Murray has sold out his coal mine interests in the local area.

Steve said that our model of industry, education and government is the best model to use. After his few months at Savage, Steve has learned that industry is very interested in the workforce issues, but haven't had the time yet to get involved. The partnership is still the best – incumbent worker training is a great program. Need to leverage funds to make it work. We have the knowledge and partnerships – just need to make it happen.

What are we going to do to project our issues? Bob said WETC has identified stations for four levels of skillsets in the industry. Now need to shift current educational programs to meet the skillsets. There is a national engineering shortage. We need to create innovation and interest to build and train our own engineers. Again: attracting, building and retaining talent.

Deliverable 2: Energy impacts. We have to make sure that our communities are not left out. Bob suggested a graphical model that they can use in identifying the impacts, and what they need to do to be ready for the growth. “Where is my family going to live” is the main question from engineers. May need to develop a survey for each community that shows its infrastructure. Is there schools, shopping, entertainment? Need to offer good schools, college-level opportunities. Lou said the state needs to put more resources into rural Utah. Need to have facilities for the women, and the men. Don't want to drive 30+ miles to shopping and libraries.

Steve said that workers are attracted to the rural lifestyle; they like the camping, hunting, fishing, outdoor activities. We don't need to have the urban lifestyle here.

Company in Florida is looking at Eastern Utah. They thought the Basin is keeping up with its growth. Used the term economic development infrastructure.

Winston Inoway then introduced himself. Works in DWS communications. Helping Regional Councils implement what they want from the energy sectors. Each sector had, as a component, a marketing plan as part of its strategy. Will be working with State Office of Education in developing materials. Thinking about having short term and longer term priorities.

Steve said we may not be ready to identify the message yet. Things have changed some. Numbers of drivers and oil workers needed is in the hundreds. That message needs to be a priority. Will require help with this message from the higher levels in state government. Steve said last three hires for truck drivers have had graduate degrees.

Richard Root said that engineers/workers are retiring every day.

Winston said he has noted the retention and advancement issues. Says there is a need to highlight career paths. There is the PR side of the energy industry, which involves promoting the opportunities to be found. And there is the side of recruitment, retention and advancement. Wants to focus on those three, both in the short and long term. He will look at what is currently being done, both in industry and education.

Bob said we need to think of the piece as being a magnet. We need all service sectors in our communities: education, healthcare, retail, etc. This energy sector could be a champion for getting the message to other sectors. Need to promote our lifestyle in our region.

Susan and Steve thanked the group for their participation.